Rev Samuel J. Baird, D.D.
From his Brother
E. T. B.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

Bethel Presbyterian Church,

LOWNDES COUNTY, MISS.

PREPARED FOR THE

SEMI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION,

JUNE 21, 1884.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE SESSION,

BY REV. E. T. BAIRD, D. D.,

A Former Minister of the Church.

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INTRODUCTION.

BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, which was organized in June 1834, was composed of Presbyterian families which had recently come from South Carolina, and which were afterwards joined by emigrants from Virginia and North Carolina. Agriculturists by education and occupation they were attracted by the rich prairie lands of Lowndes county; here they located, lived and prospered; here they raised up families to perpetuate their names and inherit their estates. The Bethel Church of to-day is maintained and supported almost entirely by the descendants of its original founders and of the other early settlers of this part of the county. Among the families of these immigrants who were located as comparatively near neighbors, and of course were thrown into constant business, social and religious associations, there naturally sprang up attachments of friendship which were confirmed and strengthened by intermarriages among their children, unity of interests and by continual general intercourse. So that during the Semi-century, bonds of mutual sympathy were formed, and a oneness of sentiment and of action were developed, such as is not often found in rural communities.

When the suggestion was made that the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Church should be celebrated, a cord was touched that vibrated through every heart in the whole community. Not the Presbyterians alone, but the neighborhood cordially united in the necessary arrangements, so as to make the celebration worthy of themselves and worthy of the occasion.

The matter of first importance and of universal interest was the preparation of a history of the Church. The Session took this subject into early consideration and instructed its Clerk to collect all available facts and documents as material for such a work, and the Rev. E. T. Baird, D. D., a former Minister of this Church was invited to prepare a semi-centennial historical discourse, to be delivered at the approaching anniversary. Dr. Baird having agreed to undertake the service, active preparations were at once begun. The celebration was appointed for Saturday, the 21st day of June. All the former Ministers of the Church who are still living were invited to be present and take part in the exercises. The house of worship which had recently been thoroughly repaired and renovated was tastefully and appropriately decorated with festoons and flowers. On the gallery wall, and arching the main entrances, was the motto in evergreen,

"ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKFULNESS."

On the rear wall of the main audience room in a semi-circular form of silvered letters was the motto,

"THY FAITHFULNESS IS UNTO ALL GENERATIONS."

The pulpit was adorned with beautiful flowers, artistically arranged; and on the right of it, in gilt were the figures "1834," and on the left "1884," each encircled with a wreath.

Great disappointment was occasioned by the failure of Dr. Baird to be present with the historical discourse. This was caused by sickness, arising from a serious accident which befel him only a few days before the time appointed for the celebration. On account of his absence, a change of programme become necessary. The Rev. A. H. Barkley, a former Pastor of the Church had prepared, at the request of the Session, and delivered at 11 o'clock of the designated day, a highly appropriate and acceptable introductory discourse, from Hebrews 111-1: "Wherefore, holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." A recess was then taken. After partaking of a sumptuous repast and spending a pleasant hour in social intercourse, the congregation re-assembled and listened to an excellent discourse by the Rev. G. T. Storey, our present Minister. Letters were then read from the Rev. S. J. Love and Rev. W. G. Woodbridge, giving short sketches of their labors and associations with this Church and people.

The Providential absence of Dr. Baird and the consequent inability of carrying out the original programme was a source of great regret to all. At the request of the Session, however, as soon as he was physically able, he transcribed the historical

part of his intended discourse, and forwarded it for the use of the Church. In preparing it, he not only availed himself of the full material obtained through the Clerk of the Session, and of his own extensive personal knowledge, but by the careful examination of all accessible papers, such as extracts from the records of the Presbytery and Synod, kindly furnished him by their respective Stated Clerks, and the published minutes of the General Assembly, he aimed to get all the facts attainable. It is believed that this Sketch is as correct as it can now be made from available sources.

In order that the original purpose of the membership in undertaking this celebration may be more fully accomplished, it has been determined to print the Historical Sketch in pamphlet form for distribution among friends, relatives and former members of the Church as a means of preserving and handing down to future generations a full, complete and reliable history. Thus the memory of the Fathers of Bethel Church will be cherished and kept fresh and fragrant; that respect and honor which is so eminently their due will be shown to the work and the course which they pursued in the establishment and maintenance of this Church; and their example of Christian faithfulness, liberality and zeal will be held in remembrance for filial imitation, and it is hoped will become a stimulus and encouragement to their descendants and successors in perpetuating their labors.

On behalf of the session,

WILL A. LOVE, Clerk.

Crawford, Miss., February 25, 1885.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Bethel Church, in Lowndes County, Mississippi, was organized in June 1834, by Evangelists labouring within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tombeckbee, under the authority of the following resolution adopted at a meeting held at Columbus, March 20, 1834, viz:

Resolved, "That the several members of this Presbytery and Evangelists employed under its care, be authorized to organize Churches wherever in their judgment it shall be expedient."

The records of this Church state that it was organized by the Rev. David Wright, assisted by the Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury; whereas the records of the meeting of Presbytery at Mayhew, Oct. 2, 1834, say:

"The Rev. Edmund Lanier, having been employed to labour within the bounds (of the Presbytery) reported that he had according to the authority with which he was invested, and with the assistance of the Rev. David Wright, organized a Church in Oktibbeha* County, named Bethel. *Resolved,* That this report be accepted and the Church received under our care. Mr. Drennan Love, an Elder from said Church appeared and took his seat as a member of Presbytery."

There can be no doubt that all the ministers named were present at the organization, and took part in the services connected therewith. It is probable Mr. Lanier and Mr. Wright were there by appointment, and Dr. Kingsbury only as a visitor. Hence the omission of his name in Mr. Lanier's report. The omission of Mr. Lanier's own name in the Sessional minute is probably owing to the fact that the other Ministers were members of the Presbytery, whereas he was not.

The names of these Ministers, however, throw much light on the early history of this Church and the circumstances which then surrounded this community. The Indians were still here. The Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury, who spent his life as a Missionary to the Indians at this time resided at Mayhew, which was the headquarters of the Indian mission, being about ten miles north of Starkville. The Choctaw Agency, where the Indians received their government bounties, is only about twelve or fourteen miles from this Church, and still retains its old name. This Mayhew mission, which had now been organized as the Mayhew Church, experienced a great awakening from 1829 to 1831. From the statistics given in the Assembly's Minutes, we learn that in 1830, the Mayhew Church reported the admission on examination of the remarkable number of one hundred and thirty, and a total membership of one hundred and fifty-five, and in 1831 a like addition of one hundred and thirty-four with a total membership of two hundred and eighty. At the time of the organization of Bethel Church, in June, 1834, we find a great decline in the number of members of the Mayhew Church; for it reported a total membership of only forty-six, of whom during the year, two had been received on examination, and eighteen on certificate. The reason of this state of facts evidently is, that the

* This is a mistake, Bethel is in Lowndes County.

Indians were steadily removing, under the authority of the government to their western reservation in what is now called the Indian Territory and a white immigration was taking their place. The removal of the Indians was not completed for one or two years thereafter. A portion of the Missionaries, viz: the Rev. Alfred Wright, Rev. Loring S. Williams and Rev. Ebenezer Hotchkin had already gone west with the Indians. Subsequently the Rev. Cyrus Byington, in 1834 or 1835, and the Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury, D. D., about the year 1836, went out to the new reservation, and there for many years they continued their labours among the Indians, until each of them at a venerable age was called to enter upon rest. Others of the Missionaries remained in Mississippi and ministered to the white Churches which in the meantime had been organized.

The Presbytery of Tombeckbee with which this Church is connected and by whose authority it was organized, was constituted by order of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, at its sessions in the city of Charleston, begun and held on the 11th day of December 1828. The records say:

"By request of the Presbytery of South Alabama, this Synod constituted a new Presbytery, including the Territory north of the Sipse river in Alabama, and embracing the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations of Indians; the Presbytery to hold their first meeting at Mayhew, one of the Missionary stations of the Choctaw Nation on the Friday before the first Sabbath in June, 1829; the meeting to be opened with a sermon by the Rev. Allen Wright." (This is a misnomer, the name is always correctly given in this Assembly's statistics, Alfred Wright.)

At that time the jurisdiction of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia extended over all South Alabama and that part of Mississippi occupied by the two Indian tribes named in the above minute. On the 30th of June, 1828, the Indians still owned in Mississippi, 16,885,760 acres of land, whereas the United States had acquired a title to only 11,514,517 acres. A map of the United States, found in the American Almanac for 1831, shows all North Mississippi to belong to the Chickasaws, and the central part from the Tombeckbee to the Mississippi river to belong to the Chocktaws. The number of Indians in Mississippi, by the census of 1830 was 23,400. As late as April 2, 1832, the General Land Office reported to Congress that in Mississippi the Indian title to 6,529,280 acres of territory had not yet been extinguished. These statistics have been culled from the American Almanac.

The minutes of the Presbytery state that:

"Agreeably to the above act of Synod the Rev. Messrs. Thomas Archibald, Allen (Alfred) Wright, and Cyrus Kingsbury, members of the Presbytery of South Alabama, met at Mayhew on the 7th day of June, 1829, and constituted a new Presbytery to be called Tombigbee Presbytery."

The only Churches on the roll of the Presbytery of South Alabama lying in the State of Mississippi, as given in the statistical report of 1829, were called the "Choctaw Nation," and "Luxapalila." Of the former the number of members is not given; the latter reported 16 members. "Choctaw Nation" does not appear on the first report of "Tombigbee Presbytery," in 1830, but seems to have given way to Mayhew Church. "Luxapalila" continued on the roll until 1834, when

it disappeared. It was one of the Indian Mission Churches which vanished with the Indians.

The new Presbytery was immediately incorporated into a new Synod. The Assembly of 1829 met before the time appointed for the organization of the Presbytery, and on the petition of the Presbytery of Mississippi resolved that

"The Presbyteries of Mississippi, South Alabama and Bigby are hereby formed into a new Synod, to be known by the name of the Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama.

Resolved, That the Synod of Mississippi and South Alabama hold their first meeting at Mayhew on the second Wednesday of November next at 11 o'clock, A. M., and that the Rev. R. M. Cunningham, D. D., or in case of his absence, the senior Minister present, preach the sermon at the opening, and preside until a Moderator is chosen."

Accordingly the Synod was constituted at "Mayhew, Choctaw Nation, Nov. 11, 1829." In 1835 the Presbytery of Tombeckbee was set off from this Synod to the Synod of Alabama, constituted by the assembly of that year; but in 1842 the State line was made the boundary between the two Synods of Mississippi and Alabama, whereby the Presbytery with diminished territory was restored to the Synod of Mississippi.

Even previous to the opening of the government Land Office at Columbus, immigration began to set in; but when the lands were thrown into the market by the establishment of the land agency about 1832, adventurers of every character commenced to flock here. Speculation in these rich lands was rife, whilst recklessness and dissipation alarmingly prevailed, caused in a large degree by the flush times which arose from the rapid accumulation of fortunes by successful speculators. Of course religion was at a discount. Soon an infidel society or club was organized, which exerted a pestilential influence over the town of Columbus and the surrounding country, but especially over the young men. However, in the winter of 1839-40, the Rev. James Smith, D. D., then a Cumberland Presbyterian, but afterward a distinguished Minister of our own Church, delivered in Columbus a few lectures on the "Dangerous Tendencies of Infidelity." Thereupon, C. G. Olmstead, Esq., the leader of the club challenged him to a controversy. Dr. Smith accepted the challenge and met Mr. Olmstead in an oral public debate at Columbus, in April, 1841. The popular judgment was that he completely answered the cavils and arguments of his assailant. Infidelity, however, was greatly embittered, and carried on an unrelenting warfare against Christianity. Rev. James A. Lyon. D. D., having removed to Columbus in the October succeeding the debate, the clan of infidels directed their warfare against him. He met the assault without fear or dismay; and at the risk of personal violence, apprehended by his friends, confronted, exposed and routed the enemy. Meanwhile Mr. Olmstead, who had lost his prestige, quitted the State and the infidel club ceased to meet.

Along with the motley crowd of speculators who resorted here there were many immigrants of a very different type; men who had left their worn-out plantations to the eastward, to find a home of plenty for their households; and young men just starting in life, coming here to secure an abode, and to raise up for themselves a name

and a heritage. These were the classes which afterward became the permanent owners of these lands, and their descendants form the bone and sinew of Church and State in these parts to-day.

Among the immigrants who sought homes in these newly opened regions were many serious and thoughtful persons, who had enjoyed the privileges of the Church, and some of whom had been Church members before their emigration from the older States. Such persons longed for the courts of Zion, and were earnest in their desires, prayers, and efforts to secure for their children the same kind of Christian influences under which they themselves had been trained. Churches of the various denominations had already been organized in Columbus. In the spring of 1834, the Presbyterians who resided in this neighbourhood were made glad by a visit from the Rev. David Wright, who preached the first sermon ever preached by a Presbyterian Minister within the bounds of this congregation. This service was held in the open air, under a large oak tree on the premises of Capt. Wm. Ervin, near where Mr. J. C. Cox now resides, being about nine miles south from Columbus. The text was: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Ps. ix: 17. Temporary arrangements had been made for this interesting occasion, and there was a good congregation present; considered large, for the times. The discourse was highly appreciated. The assembling of the people for public worship revived the memories of the privileges and associations of their former homes. suggested the idea of establishing Church ordinances, and securing the benign influences of religion to bless them in the place of their abode. The Presbyterians were few in number, widely separated, and of course their residence here had generally been short. All those who subsequently united in the organization had located here since the previous first of January, possibly with one or two exceptions. Of course they were, for the most part, strangers to one another. On this occasion, however, they were brought together as brethren, and they determined to satisfy the longings of their hearts, by securing the organization of a Church and the establishment of regular worship. By united neighbourhood exertion, a building called the "Shelter" was erected near the spot where the first sermon had been preached, and was soon made ready for occupancy. It was simply a roof of boards, supported by posts firmly set in the ground. The seats were of split logs placed upon blocks. The pulpit was an elevated platform enclosed on three sides by boards. This building well served its purpose as a "Shelter," except in inclement weather, when the services were held at the residence of Capt. Wm. Ervin, near by.

The Presbyterian immigration to this region had chiefly been from South Carolina. In March, 1834, Mr. Thomas R. Witherspoon, a recent emigrant from that State, attended the meeting of the Presbytery at Columbus, and on his own behalf and that of his Presbyterian neighbours, requested that steps should be taken for their organization into a Church. The result was that the Ministers already named, in the following June, attended at the designated place, "the Shelter," and with appropriate services, constituted the following persons into a Church to be known as Bethel Presbyterian

Church, viz: Drennan Love, Thomas R. Witherspoon, Wm. Ervin, James W. Ervin, Mrs. Elizabeth L. Love, Mrs. Margaret Ervin Witherspoon, and Mrs. Rosamond Odeneal; together with the following servants of Thomas R. Witherspoon: Nero, York, Sally, Venus, Anthony, Nancy, Satira, Ambrose and Dinah. Messrs. Drennan Love, Thos. R. Witherspoon and Wm. Ervin were elected Ruling Elders. Capt. Ervin had served in the same office in South Carolina, and hence did not require ordination. Messrs. Love and Witherspoon were ordained, and all three were installed as Ruling Elders in Bethel Church.

Thus, beginning with seven white and nine colored members, this Church entered upon its career of usefulness, and through times of prosperity as well as in the midst of scenes of adversity, it has kept on its way even until now—at the end of half a century—we meet here to-day to record the goodness of God to us and to our fathers, and to raise our Ebenezer in view of the mercies which we have experienced. During all these years, with very short intervals, this Church has enjoyed the stated ministrations of the Word, except that, from 1873 to 1876, a period during which the Church was practically disorganized by the death of its last Elder and only officer:—and again, from October, 1880, to October, 1881, there was no regular supply, but only occasional services. The other intervals were never so long as even six months.

About 1840–41, the "Shelter" was abandoned, and a new log Church was built about three miles west of it, on the land of the late Major Robert Hairston, where the services were afterward held for about four years. In 1844–5, a new framed Church was erected at the present location; and from that time until now the services have been conducted in it.

The whole number of white members admitted to full communion in Bethel Church is ninety-eight, of whom about one-half were received on profession of their faith in Christ. Of these thirty have died, thirty-eight have received letters to connect themselves with other Churches; three have been separated from the Church by discipline; leaving the present white membership twenty-seven. Meanwhile, seventy five children have received baptism. At the organization, nine colored members were enrolled; and one hundred and thirty were afterwards admitted on examination during the days of slavery. But now, only one adheres to the Church. Many are dead, the rest have gone to Churches of their own race.

Of those included in the organization, only three are now living. James W. Ervin. now of Pleasant Ridge, Alabama; Mrs. Elizabeth L. Love, who at the venerable age of seventy-seven years sets an example of faithfulness worthy of imitation by young and old, in her regular attendance on public worship; and Ambrose Witherspoon, usually called "Uncle Ambert," who is the only person of the colored race who still affiliates with us.

Bethel Church, I think reached its highest point of prosperity, both in spirituals and temporals, during the years just preceding the war, when it was my privilege to serve it. It was at peace within and without. The congregations were large, and steadily increasing. The

people manifested a growing and conscientious liberality, commensurate to their increasing prosperity; not only fully doubling the amount formerly contributed to Ministerial support, but advancing steadily in their contributions to other objects, their offerings for such purposes being about $200, $300, $400, and $600 for the four years respectively that I ministered to them. Everything betokened spiritual life, and gave promise of onward progress and enlarged usefulness. I told my successor, when urging him to visit the church that if he made up his mind to come, and stay permanently, I believed he would minister to a Church which would not only continue to be a powerful instrumentality for good in this community, but in a few years would become the first country Church in influence and usefulness in our denomination, then extending over the whole land. But this bright prospect, in less than a year thereafter, was overshadowed by the dismal cloud of war. And then, when the bloody strife was over, the spirit of partizan hate began to stalk in our midst, political and social alienations became common, and care, anxiety and poverty assumed the place of ease, self-security and wealth. Men's minds were absorbed by the distracting things of the world, and the evils of the State extended their baleful influence within the portals of the Church. As everywhere else, this Church also felt their full force. The venerable fathers who had long been its pillars one by one passed away, borne down with care, overburdened with sorrow; and happy households were scattered hither and yon; nor were the children of the Church found ready as yet to take the places of the fathers. The Church thus receded before the calamities which befel it, until in the spring of 1873, the Pastor having been elected Presbyterial Evangelist, the pastoral relation was dissolved. The only Elder, the venerable Drennan Love, dying about the same time, and there being no one to take his place, the Presbytery transferred the entire membership to Crawford Church, formerly called Mt. Zion. The membership still held together, however, at their house of worship, conducted a Sabbath School in summer, and occasionally enjoyed religious services by some visiting Minister.

On the 14th of October, 1876, a commission of Presbytery, consisting of Rev. J. D. McClintock, D. D., Rev. A. H. Barkley and Elder Scott Thompson, in answer to a petition of nineteen members of the former Bethel Church met with the people, admitted William A. Love on examination, and Dr. Albert C. Love and Mrs. Emma Locke by letter, and with appropriate services reorganized the Church. Edwin A. Ervin and William A. Love were elected Ruling Elders, and David C. Love a Deacon. William A. Love alone accepted the office to which he had been elected, and was accordingly ordained and installed a ruling Elder. Since then, eight have been admitted to the Lord's table on profession of their faith, and four have been received by letter. In the meantime, seven have died.

Twenty Ministers in all have served this Church, during the past fifty years; eighteen of whom have sustained the position of Stated Supply, and only two have occupied the relation of Pastor. All those who have preceded me are dead, except one; but all who succeeded me are still living.

1. The Rev. David Wright, at the time of the organization of the Church in June, 1834, was received as the first Stated Supply, and ministered to the Church once a month for two years. The name of Mr. Wright first appears in the records of the "Missssionary Association of the Chahta and Chickesaw Nation," at a meeting held at Mayhew in October, 1827; but at that time he was not a Minister. In 1829, his name is, for the first time, reported by the Presbytery of Mississippi, as a licentiate under its care. At the second regular meeting of the Presbytery of Tombeckbee, held at Mayhew, November 11, 1829, he was received from the Presbytery of Mississippi; and, at an adjourned meeting at Columbus, Jan. 8, 1830, he was ordained as an Evangelist. He seems to have laboured chiefly in this capacity until his death in 1840. He was serving the Columbus Chucrh at the time of his ordination, and continued to give that Church a part of his time for three years. But in 1830, the Columbus Church reported only seven members, the precise number of white members with which Bethel began. This number had increased to thirty only, in 1834, when Bethel Church was organized.

2. The Rev. Edmund Lanier was the second Stated Supply, one Sabbath a month, from April 1836 to April 1837. He was a member of the Presbytery of West Tennessee, but was employed by the Presbyterial Committee of Missions as an Evangelist. He continued in this work among the Churches of the Presbytery of Tombeckbee for two or three years. In the Assembly's Minutes for 1841, he is reported as having died during the year.

3. The Rev. Thomas Archibald was Stated Supply from April 1837 to April 1838. He resided near Caledonia Church, was one of the three original members of this Presbytery, and remained in its connection till his death in 1846. In the notice of his death, the Presbytery says: "He was one of the pioneers of this part of the country; was always faithful and laborious in the discharge of his duties according to his abilities. His piety was characterized by deep humility and sincerity. His son, Dr. Wm. J. Archibald was received on examination, September 10, 1848; but on his own confession of a lack of Christian character he was excluded June 7, 1857.

4. The Rev. Thomas Morrow, D. D., was received by this Presbytery as a licentiate from the Presbytery of North Alabama March 30, 1837, and was immediately ordained as an Evangelist. He was dismissed Oct. 19, 1837, to the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa. In May, 1838, he became the Stated Supply of this pulpit, one Sabbath a month until May 1839. Subsequently he became seriously involved in difficulties which sprung up in Oak Grove Church, Pickens County Alabama, which is under the care of the Presbytery of Tuscaloosa. Refusing to submit to the authority of the Presbytery, he renounced its jurisdiction in 1853, and united with the New School Presbytery of North Alabama. In 1864, he returned to us along with the United Synod, which that year was re-united with our Church. He has for several years been laid aside from active labour by the infirmities of age.

5. The Rev. Richard S. Gladney supplied the pulpit once a month from June 1839 to May 1840. He resided in Pickens County Alabama, in charge of a Male High School. In 1844, he removed to Aberdeen

Mississippi, where he was for several years Principal of the Aberdeen Female College. He died suddenly at Artesia, Mississippi, Oct. 8, 1869, of apoplexy, at the age of sixty-three years, when about to open a Female Seminary there, with every promise of success. Prof. Gladney was born in Fairfield District, S. C., Nov. 10, 1806. He was educated at South Carolina College and Columbia Theological Seminary, and was probably licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of Harmony, from which he brought a dismission, and was received by the Presbytery of Tombeckbee, Oct. 14, 1837. He was a man of superior talents and acquirements, possessed an inquisitive mind which rapidly acquired knowledge, and was enthusiastic in the pursuit of truth. His methods of dealing with error were often original and striking, exhibiting a profound acquaintance with theology, and a deep conviction of the truth of the doctrines which he had embraced. Well does the Presbytery testify: "In his death we can say, without exaggeration, the cause of truth has lost one of its ablest expounders, and the Presbyterian Church one of her boldest and most valiant defenders."

6. The Rev. Wm A. Gray next supplied the pulpit once a month from May 25, 1840, to May 8, 1842. Mr. Gray was afterwards for many years Pastor of the Church at Ripley, Mississippi, where he died in the fall of 1881, greatly respected and beloved.

7. The Rev. John M. Morrow, a brother of Rev. Thomas Morrow, was the Stated Supply from May 1842 to May 1843. He was a candidate under the care of this Presbytery, was licensed by it in 1837, and in April 1842, was ordained *sine titulo.* He died at his home near old Mayhew Mission, April 15, 1857. In its obituary notice the Presbytery testify that his "undoubted piety, zeal in the discharge of his official duties, and consistent walk and conversation, commended the gospel of Christ to his fellow men." For several years he was the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. In 1841, he was united in marriage with Mrs. Jane M. Willson, a daughter of Capt. Wm. Ervin, mentioned in another place.

8. The Rev. Samuel P. Helme was the Stated Supply from May 1843 to October 1843. He resided in Noxubee County, and taught a private school for Maj. Moore at Deer Brook. In 1846 he was dismissed to the Presbytery of Mississippi where he was a "Missionary to the 'Slaves." In 1849 he removed to western Louisiana where he served for a number of years as a Domestic Missionary. He was a laborious and active member of the Presbytery of Red River, when the Master called him home, June 11, 1882. He received his Theological education at Princeton.

9. The Rev. Henry McDonald was the Stated Supply from October 1843 to October 1845 giving this Church three-fourths and Mt. Zion one-fourth of his time. During his incumbency a Sabbath School was organized, a weekly prayer meeting established, and the present house of worship erected. Mr. McDonald was received by the Presbytery of Tombeckbee as a licentiate from the Presbytery of Mississippi in April 1842, and immediately was ordained *sine titulo.* He returned to the Presbytery of Mississippi to which he took a dismission in 1846 and laboured within its bounds for a period of about

twenty years. After the war he went to Texas where he was active and useful in restoring the wastes of Zion. He was for many years a great sufferer from an injury received from an accident which finally constrained him to desist from labour about a year before his death. He died while on a visit to relatives in Kemper County, Mississippi, in the Spring of 1882, and was buried near old Wahalak Church where he once preached. He was a graduate of Oakland College Mississippi, but studied Theology privately, I believe.

10. The Rev. James A. Lyon, D. D., of Columbus gave this Church one Sabbath a month for one year, from October 1845 to September 1846. Dr. Lyon was subsequently called to a Church in St. Louis; but in 1854 he was recalled to Columbus, where he remained until 1870, when he was elected Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in the University of Mississippi. This position he filled ably for eleven years, when failing health compelled him to resign, and in less than a year the summons came. Dr. Lyon was a graduate of Washington College, East Tennessee, and of Princeton Theological Seminary, where he took a four years' course. He was a man of ability, learning and culture; possessed of a commanding presence, and a handsome and striking countenance, with symmetrical and even beautiful features, and had much dignity of bearing. He was decided in his convictions, earnest in his actions and courageous in the presence of opposition. Whenever he felt himself summoned by the call of duty, he never hesitated to go forward at whatever hazard. Hence he was always a man of mark, looked up to as a leader, and exerted a powerful influence. Well and faithfully had he served his generation, but especially the Church of which he was a distinguished Minister. When he died, May 15, 1882, it was truly felt that a prince and a great man had fallen in Israel. He was Moderator of the Synod of Mississippi in 1844; and in 1863 was Moderator of the General Assembly, being the third that received that high honour.

11. The Rev. Mitchel Peden, who was received as a member of the Presbytery of Tombeckbee from the Presbytery of Harmony, S. C., April 11, 1845, took charge of this Church in the fall of 1846, and was installed its first Pastor in April, 1847. He sustained this relation until the fall of 1850, when it was dissolved. Mr. Peden continued to labour within the bounds of this Presbytery, chiefly with the Lebanon and Bethsalem Churches in Winston county, until two or three years before his decease, when he was disabled by paralysis. He died at his residence near here, August 31, 1868. Mr. Peden was born in Spartanburg District, August 2, 1809. He studied theology at Columbia Seminary, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Harmony, April 8, 1838, and soon thereafter was ordained. He was conscientious in the discharge of every trust, steadfast in adherence to principle, and sound in the faith; and was faithful in attending on the courts of the Church. He was Moderator of the Synod of Mississippi in 1860. He was twice married, his second wife being the widow of Dr. John M. Ervin, spoken of in another connection.

12. The Rev. J. Sidney Hays was Stated Supply once a month from November 1850, to March 1851. He then ministered to the Church at Louisville, in Winston County. Shortly thereafter he was

called to an important Missionary work in New Orleans, and while in the faithful and zealous discharge of his duties, was cut down by yellow fever in the summer of 1855, after a ministry of about five years. Mr. Hays was first a candidate, and then a licentiate of this Presbytery, and was ordained by it as an Evangelist, Oct. 18, 1850.

13. The Rev. Wm. C. Emerson, who was ministering to the Starkville Church, supplied this pulpit one Sabbath a month, from March, 1851 to March, 1852. He continued to labour diligently among the Churches of this and the East Mississippi Presbytery until the close of the war, when he removed with a colony to Brazil, in South America, where he died in 1874 or 1875. His family still reside in Brazil.

14. The Rev. Allen T. Graves supplied the pulpit from March, 1852, to September, 1855. He taught the Bethel township school, and gave three Sabbaths a month to Bethel Church and one Sabbath to Mt. Zion Church. He removed from here to New Jersey, and his wife, Mrs. Sarah V. Graves, took a letter March 30, 1856, to a Church there. He died Dec. 5, 1878, at Plainfield, N. J. He was educated at Centre College, Ky., and Princeton Theological Seminary

15. The Rev. James Weatherby, who was then Principal of the Aberdeen Female College, was received into the Presbytery of Tombeckbee at a meeting held at Bethel Church in October, 1855; and was secured as the Stated Supply of Bethel and Mt. Zion Churches. He removed his family here in November following, but preached only three or four times, when he was prostrated by sickness, and died in January, 1856, thus ending a laborious ministerial service of many years among the feeble Churches of the South and South-West. His work here was short, but he had already won the hearts of the people. "Bro. Weatherby," says the Presbyterial minute, "was a man of piety, of talents, and of experience, and promised great usefulness in the field of labour on which he had just entered." He was buried at Mt. Zion Church. He was educated at the College of New Jersey, and at Princeton Theological Seminary. He was Moderator of the Synod of Mississippi in 1846. His wife, sister and oldest daughter were members of this Church, but are dead. Mrs. Elena R Weatherby died suddenly January 31, 1859, and her daughter, Miss Ella, also suddenly, on June 19 following. Miss Catherine Weatherby died in October, 1869.

16. I was myself the next incumbent. As the "General Agent of the Board of Domestic Missions for the South-West" I had visited officially both Bethel and Mt. Zion Churches in May, 1855; and now again in my official capacity, I visited both Churches on the last Sabbath of March, 1856. I administered the Lord's Supper at Bethel, with preliminary services on Friday and Saturday, and preached at Mt. Zion on Sabbath afternoon. I had resigned my agency to take effect April 1st. It pleased this and the Mt. Zion Church to invite me to minister to them. This I agreed to do only for six months, as I then had other positions in view. The result was, however that I continued with these united Churches four years and a half, from April 1, 1856, to Oct. 1, 1860; a period of uninterrupted happiness and enjoyment in my official work, and in all my personal and social relations. At first I preached to this Church two Sabbaths a month,

the rest of my time being divided between Mt. Zion, Macon and Centre Point. The Churches, meanwhile, increased in strength so as to be able to support two Ministers. Hence in October, 1859, I gave up the charge of the Macon and Centre Point Churches, declining a call to become their Pastor; and thereafter gave this Church three-fourths of my time, and Mt. Zion one-fourth. On the first of October, 1860, I resigned my relation with you. My only reason for so doing was that I believed a wider field of usefulness was offered me.

17. The Rev. Andrew H. Barkley, on my own recommendation, was invited to take charge of this Church and Mt. Zion, on my resignation, October 1, 1860. At the end of the first year he was elected and installed Pastor, which relation he sustained until April, 1873, when he was appointed Presbyterial Evangelist, and the relation was accordingly dissolved. He has continued his connection with this Presbytery, living in this immediate neighbourhood, and preaching constantly to contiguous Churches. He was educated at Washington College, East Tennessee, and at Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1873 he was Moderator of the Synod of Mississippi. In 1872 he married Miss Sallie Alice Hairston, then a member of this Church, who is mentioned elsewhere.

18. On the re-organization of the Church, Oct. 14, 1876, the Rev. S. J. Love was secured as Stated Supply, and served the Church once a month for nearly three years, till the summer of 1879, giving the rest of his time to the Macon and Centre Point Churches, his residence being at Macon. Mr. Love is a native of Ireland and a graduate of Queen's College, Belfast, where he also pursued his theological studies. Subsequently he completed his theological course at Edinburg, Scotland. He was married in his native land and shortly thereafter emigrated to this country with his family and sister-in law, Miss Maria A. Smith, now Mrs. Gaston of Enterprise. He resided and preached for some time at New Berne, N. C., from whence he received and accepted a call to Petersburg, Va., uniting with East Hanover Presbytery. In 1841 he became a member of Lexington Presbytery, and was installed Pastor of Hebron Church, in Augusta Co., which he served continuously for nearly twenty years, loved and honoured by all. Removing to Mississippi about 1860, he located at Pine Ridge, near Natchez, and besides preaching statedly, conducted successfully a High School for a time, which was discontinued towards the latter part of the war. His labours since then have been chiefly among Churches on, or contiguous to the M. & O. R. R., and within the bounds of Tombeckbee Presbytery, of which he is still a member. This venerable brother is now a resident of Kansas City, Missouri, laid aside from active service, in a cause which he greatly loved, by physical infirmity.

After a short interval, the Rev. W. G. Woodbridge, of Enterprise, Miss., was secured as Stated Supply once a month, from September, 1879 to October, 1880. During his incumbency, the Church building, upon which time had laid violent hands, was thoroughly renovated within, and made bright and inviting without, and an organ was purchased. A spirit of revival was present, manifested in large and attentive congregations, and in an enthusiasm in every good work. Two

Ruling Elders and one Deacon were elected, ordained, and installed. Mr. Woodbridge is now Pastor of the Fifth Presbyterian Church in the city of Chicago, Illinois. He received his education at the College of New Jersey and at Columbia and Princeton Theological Seminaries.

20. The Church again had no regular preaching from October, 1880 to October 1881, but only occasional services from Rev. G. S. Roudebush, D. D., then Professor of English Literature in the State Agricultural and Mechanical College at Starkville, and Rev. A. B. Coit, the Presbyterial Evangelist. But in October, 1881, the Rev. Granville T. Storey, who had just accepted the call of the Starkville Church, agreed to give this Church one Sabbath a month; and has continued to be and is now your Minister. Mr. Storey was educated at the University of Mississippi and at Union Theological Seminary, Va.

On this plain and unvarnished narrative much might be said; but time and room only permit me to make a few very brief observations:

(1.) In looking over this list of nineteen Ministers who, besides myself, have filled this pulpit, the first thing that arrests attention is their distinguished character. I knew all but four of them personally, several of them intimately, and all of them of course by reputation; and truly I can say I find myself to belong to a goodly company. All who preceded me have finished their course except the venerable Dr. Thomas Morrow, who has long been laid aside from ministerial labour by the infirmaties of waning manhood. Among them you will recognize the names of men of learning and high standing in the Church, and all of them were men who had consecrated their lives to their work. They have left behind them a good report, and their praise is still in the Churches. Mr. Wright, Dr. Morrow, Prof. Gladney, Mr. Gray, Dr. Lyon, Mr. Hays, Mr. Graves and Mr. Weatherby, while differing greatly in their gifts and attainments, were all men of marked ability; and all the rest were faithful preachers of the pure and unadulterated gospel. Of those who succeeded me, and all of whom are still living, I can say, without hesitation, they are men of like character. Truly a Church which has enjoyed such a ministry has been blessed of God.

(2.) The frequency of the changes is another thing which arrests attention. I know of no other Church which, in the same length of time, has been served by so many Ministers. Mr. Barkley's ministry was much the longest, twelve years and a half. My own comes next, four years and a half. Mr. Peden served four years; Mr. Graves, three years and a half; Mr. Love, more than two years and a half; Messrs. Wright, Gray, and McDonald, each two years; Messrs. Lanier, Archibald, Thos. Morrow, Gladney, J. M. Morrow, Lyon, Emerson, and Woodbridge, each one year; Mr. Helme, six months; Mr. Hays, five months; and Mr. Weatherby, about three months. Mr. Storey has been with you nearly three years, and is still incumbent. In reading the preceding statement we can readily discover the evidences of advancing worldly prosperity among the people, and the consequent increasing of the strength of the Church, previous to the ~~recourses~~ of the war. These things are made manifest in the arrangements devised for a resident ministry, for more frequent services, and for a longer continuance of the Ministerial relation.

(3.) The tenacity and the unflinching faithfulness of the Eldership and of the Church, in clinging to the ordinances of their own order, claim our admiration. How many the interruptions and the disappointments which your fathers experienced in preserving a living ministry. But yet with what courage and zeal do we see them, when driven from one reliance, betake themselves to another expedient; so that during all these fifty years, with but little interruption, the lamp of Divine truth has been kept burning on the altar, and God has not been left without a witness.

(4.) We see how the early pioneer Ministers had to struggle with poverty, and, in large part, support themselves, in order that they might have the privilege of preaching Christ and his precious gospel. Most of those preceding me and two or three of those who have succeeded me, came long distances to preach to this Church, teaching, some of them, to support their families, or as a supplement to their inadequate salaries, in order to eke out a subsistence in their respective charges. The early history of this Church antedates the days of rail roads and rapid transit which some of your later Ministers have enjoyed. But the earlier Ministers who have gone to their rest, pursued their long and wearisome journeys from Columbus, or Starkville, or Caledonia, or Pickens County, Alabama, or wherever else they resided, usually on horseback, that at the call of your fathers they might here preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. To-day, you enjoy the fruit of their labours.

Ten persons in all have served in the office of Ruling Elder in Bethel Church. Beside the three Elders inducted into office at its first organization in 1834, and the one Elder ordained at its re-organization in 1876, who have already been named, Dr. John M. Ervin was inducted into office, May 25, 1839: Artemas C. Jennings, Dec. 22. 1844; Samuel Witherspoon, Esq., Aug. 8, 1847; Dr. Robert H. Carson, Nov. 27, 1852; and Dr P. C. Hairston and Hugh T. Belton, Sept. 5, 1880.

1. Thomas R Witherspoon, one of the original set of Elders, was the first who was called for by the Master. He died in 1837, after a service of three years, at the age of forty-five. He was a native of Williamsburg, South Carolina, belonging to that staunch Presbyterian stock of Witherspoons which has given so many eminent men to the ministry of our Church, and whose scions are to be found in all parts of the South and South-West; always Presbyterians in principle, generally professors of religion, and often office-bearers in the Church. Lineal descendants of John Knox, through his daughter, Mrs. Mary Welsh, and closely related to the Rev. John Witherspoon, D.D, L.L.D., who was President of the College of New Jersey, and a signer of the Declaration of American Independence, it is no marvel that they should be staunch in their principles and their Presbyterianism. Mr. Witherspoon had united with the Church in his native State; and when he removed, first to Green County, Alabama, in January, 1832, and afterward in February, 1834, to Lowndes County, Miss., he brought his principles, his religion and his Presbyterianism with him. He located ten miles south from Columbus, and promptly joined with the other

Presbyterian immigrants in arranging for the establishment of a Church. for the sake of himself and his family, then embracing eight children, and for the sake of his servants, of whom nine were communicants in the Presbyterian Church. To this end he visited the Presbytery of Tombeckbee at its meeting at Columbus, March 20, 1834, only about a month after his arrival at his new home, to secure a Minister to effect the organization, His devotion to the Church was great and it is still remembered how fervently he prayed for the prosperity of Bethel, which he always called, "a vine of the Lord's planting." His respected widow, Mrs. Margaret Ervin Witherspoon, who was a niece of Capt. Wm. Ervin, continued her membership and her active interest in this Church for about twelve years after her husband's decease. On her removal to Columbus, she was dismissed to the Church at that place, March, 24, 1849, along with her daughter, Miss Ann E. Witherspoon, who had been admitted on examination May 14, 1842. Her son, Robert E. Witherspoon was admitted to the Lord's table, May 8, 1841. He died many years ago.

2. Capt. William Ervin, another Elder of the first set, was the next that was called to a seat in the upper sanctuary. He also was from South Carolina, where he had exercised the office of Ruling Elder; and came out to this new country among the early settlers, for the sake of his large and interesting family. He deeply felt the religious deprivations of his new home, and longed for the privileges of the sanctuary, and the preaching of that gospel under the influences of which he had been trained, which he had embraced, and whose saving power he wished his household to experience. He deserves to be gratefully remembered for his zeal and activity in the establishment of this Church. The first sermon was preached in a grove near his house; the first tabernacle of worship was erected on his land; and when the weather was too inclement to admit of holding the services under "the Shelter," his doors were thrown open, and the worship of God was held under his own roof. He died, Nov. 6, 1839, after serving as a Ruling Elder for five years and a half, but having lived to see the mantle of his office fall upon one of his sons. He is well represented to-day in your membership through his descendants. His widow, Mrs. Eliza E. Ervin, who was received on examination, October 10, 1841, survived him about five years, and died in 1844. Seven of their children became communicants of this Church, viz: James W. Ervin, Dr. John M. Ervin and Edwin A. Ervin, each specially mentioned elsewhere, Mrs. Jane M. Willson, along with her husband David I. Willson, received on examination May 25, 1839; Mrs. Margaret M. Gilson, received by letter, October 10, 1841, and subsequently dismissed elsewhere; Mrs. Susanna L. Jordan, received on examination May 14, 1842, and dismissed to Mayhew Church, Sept. 20, 1847; and Mrs. Sarah Ann Cox, received on examination, May 1, 1853. Mr. Willson died, Aug. 23, 1839. In 1841, his widow, Mrs. Jane M. Willson was united in marriage with the Rev. John M. Morrow, and took a dismission to Mayhew Church, near which Mr. Morrow resided. Of these Mrs. Cox alone is still with you. Mrs. Jane Ervin, a sister of Capt. Wm. Ervin, who married a namesake, was received on examination in June, 1838, and was removed by death in 1843.

3. John M. Ervin, M. D., a son of Capt. Wm. Ervin, was absent attending medical lectures, when the Church was organized. Having returned home, he made a profession of his faith in Christ, Sept. 6, 1834. On May 25, 1839, he was ordained a Ruling Elder After a service of five years and two months he was removed by death, Sept. 6, 1844. He was a thoroughly educated physician, a successful practitioner, and an exemplary Christian and office-bearer. His decease was a loss to the Church and the community, which was deeply and widely felt. His wife Mrs. Mary Pou Ervin, was a daughter of Mr. A. C. Jennings, to whom he left four children, all daughters, to be trained under the covenant, three of whom became communicants in the Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Ervin was, in 1847, united in marriage with the Rev. Mitchel Peden, and on August 2, 1857, took a letter of dismission to unite with Bethsalem Church to which Mr. Peden then ministered. A son by this marriage, Wm P. Peden, was received by this Church on examination, Sept. 30. 1871, but took a dismission, Oct. 20, 1872.

4. Samuel Witherspoon, Esq., (a half brother of Thos. R. Witherspoon,) along with his wife, a son and daughter, was received by letter June 5, 1847; and on August 8 following, he was inducted into the Eldership. After a service of nearly three years, he was suspended from the sacraments and from the Eldership in April, 1850. Shortly thereafter he and his family removed into the bounds of the Beersheba Church, about eight miles east from Columbus, in which Church he was subsequently restored to membership. His wife, Mrs. Grace Witherspoon, and his son, Dr. Elias Boudinot Witherspoon, took letters to that Church, Nov. 23, 1851. His daughter, Mrs. Hester J. Kennon, had received a letter Dec. 27, 1850. A grandson of 'Squire Witherspoon, the Rev. Jerry Witherspoon, D. D., who is a son of Elder J. P. Witherspoon, of Beersheba Church, is now Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tenn. Mrs. Mary A. Witherspoon, wife of Dr. R. S. Witherspoon, another member of the South Carolina Witherspoon family, united with this Church by letter Sept. 8, 1855, but for several years has resided in Charlotte, N. C., where, along with her husband, she is a member of the First Presbyterian Church.

5. Robert H. Carson, M. D., was received by letter Nov. 23, 1851, from Demopolis, Alabama, where he had exercised the office of Ruling Elder with usefulness and acceptability. One year thereafter he was inducted into the same office in this Church. After a service of four years and a half, he died July 16, 1857. Dr. Carson was a superior man by nature and by education, and had a strongly developed character. He was affectionate in his disposition, constant in his friendships, and firm in his principles. Modest and even shrinking in his self-distrust, he was nevertheless at all times faithful to his convictions, and conscientious in the performance of duty. He loved the Church and its ordinances, was liberal in his support of them, and was a judicious officer. When the Bridegroom came, his lamp was trimmed and burning. His death was felt to be more than a loss; it was a calamity. By none was it felt more than by myself, for it occurred during my ministry, and while I was an inmate of his hospitable

family. His venerated widow, Mrs. Jane L. Carson, and their only child, Miss Letitia M. Carson, who was received by letter Feb. 13, 1870, are still of your membership, and along with Mrs. Carson's brother, Dr. John Allison, reside at the old home in this immediate neighbourhood.

6. Artemas C. Jennings, who was one of the earliest emigrants from South Carolina, having settled in Lowndes Co. in 1832, was admitted to this Church ~~along with~~ his wife, Mrs. Rebecca Pou Jennings, Oct. 22, 1842; and was elected and ordained a Ruling Elder Dec. 22, 1844. After having served the Church in the Eldership for twenty-four years, he fell asleep in Jesus, Jan. 26, 1869, in his seventy-second year. Having united with the Church somewhat late in life, he was diffident in the discharge of his public duties, but unflinching and faithful. A man of but few words, he was saving of his professions; but his life was "a living epistle." He was warmly attached to Bethel Church, was regular in his attendance on its ordinances, and gave liberally to its support, as well as to other objects of Christian effort. When he died, it was felt that one of the strong pillars of this Church had fallen, and that there was none to take his place. His end was peace. His widow, the wife of his youth, who had been to him a true help-meet for fifty-one years, survived him nearly fifteen years, and died in November, 1883, leaving a lasting influence behind her in the training of a large family of daughters for positions of usefulness and responsibility in the Church and in society. Seven of their daughters and five sons-in-law became communicants of this Church, viz: Mrs. Mary P. Peden, and her first husband, Dr. John M. Ervin; Mrs. Ann C. Ervin, and her husband, James W. Ervin; Mrs. Virginia Pou Ervin, and her husband, Edwin A. Ervin, all specially mentioned in other places; Mrs. Emily Eliza Gilson received on examination, Sept. 16, 1843, and her husband Dr. Wm. C. Gilson, received by letter Sept. 27, 1848, and both granted letters to another Church, Oct. 5, 1851; Mrs. Eugenia M. Allison, received on examination, Sept 16, 1843, and removed by death in March, 1870, and her husband, Dr. John Allison, received on examination, Dec. 24, 1882; Miss Jane W. Jennings received on examination, Oct. 14, 1865; and Mrs. Artemesia W. Shields received by letter, Feb. 13, 1870. Of all these, only the last two and Dr. Allison remain with you. Also, Mr. Jennings' grand-children, Miss Ethel G. Allison and Miss Clara A. Shields, besides three daughters of Mrs. Ervin named elsewhere, are communicants in this Church.

7. Drennan Love, one of the first set of Elders, had now outlived both of those who were called to the Eldership along with him at the organization of the Church, and all his subsequent colleagues; and for four years and three months after the death of his last associate he continued to sustain the whole responsibility of the Eldership, until on the 10th of April, 1873, the Master said to him, "Come up higher." He began life with the century, and entered into rest in his 73rd, year, after an official service of not quite thirty-nine years. When he was called to the Eldership, he made a vow never to shrink from the performance of any duty which devolved on him in his official character; and I am sure all who knew him will give him credit for great

fidelity. As was the case with his colleagues, already mentioned as having departed before him, so he also has left a name to be remembered by this Church and community, and to be revered. He possessed that rugged character which belongs to the pioneer, independent, bold and self-reliant. He was ignorant of intrigue and deception, but honest and outspoken ; abrupt often and at times even stern in his self-assertion. This detracted in some degree from his popularity ; but in that respect in which popularity has a value to be ~~deserved~~ desired he had a name and a repute to be envied. There were some who did not like Drennan Love ; but there were none who distrusted the man. All who knew him gave him the deserved meed of praise for integrity of character, firmness of conviction, and sincerity in his Christian profession. He loved the courts of Zion, and with the Psalmist, he was often heard to say: "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." He delighted to attend Presbytery, and when practicable Synod also. He was the first representative from this Church in Presbytery, and more frequently than all his associates together did he represent the Church. His attendance on the General Assembly of 1853 at Philadelphia, as a Commissioner from the Presbytery of Tombeckbee, was to him an occasion of much delight. By seeing and hearing so many of the distinguished men of the Church, in the pulpit, in platform speaking, and in the discussions on the floor of the Assembly, which on that occasion were especially able and animated ; and by witnessiug the proceedings of her highest Court, he was led to a deeper appreciation than ever of the Church of his choice, which had long claimed the homage of his head and his heart. To Bethel Church he freely gave of his substance, of his efforts, and of his prayers ; and when he died, it was felt that the very foundations were giving way beneath the Church. With the departure of this venerable Elder, there was a collapse, and for a season, the Church was disorganized. His venerable widow has lived to see the Church restored and fully equipped, and once more on the road to usefulness and prosperity, and her son filling the office which his venerated father had so long sustained. Seven of their children and one son-in-law became communicants in this Church, viz: Mrs. Mary C. Graham and Mrs. Sarah M. Belton, received on examination, Sept. 7, 1845 ; David C. Love, by letter, Oct. 27, 1860 ; Mrs. Jane E. Aiken, on examination Oct. 14, 1864 ; Dr. Albert C. Love, by letter, and William A. Love, on examination, Oct. 14, 1876 ; and James D. Love, on examination, Sept 21, 1879 ; and also, their son-in-law, Hugh T. Belton on examination, Sept. 30, 1871. Mrs. Graham, November 22, 1863, Mrs. Aiken, Dec. 29, 1877, were dismissed to other Churches ; Mrs. Belton, Dec. 29, 1880, was released to the Church above. The rest are still with you.

The other three Elders are all still living, and constitute the present Session of Bethel Church, viz: William A. Love, Dr. Peter C. Hairston, and Hugh T. Belton. May God endue them with a double portion of the spirit of their venerated predecessors.

Two Deacons only have served this Church, viz: 1. James W. Ervin, one of the seven original members, and a son of Capt. Wm. Ervin, was ordained a deacon. March 9, 1844, and continued in that

office until Sept. 30, 1847, when he and his wife, Mrs. Ann C. Ervin, who had been received on examination, Nov. 9, 1839, took letters of dismission for themselves and their baptized children, Eliza Dick, now the wife of Hon. H. L. Muldrow, and John Milton, to unite with the Mayhew Church of which Mr. Ervin was for many years afterward a Ruling Elder. For several years he has resided at Pleasant Ridge, Alabama, where he again exercises the office of Ruling Elder.

2. James D. Love, a son of Drennan Love, was admitted to full fellowship, Sept. 21, 1879, and was ordained a Deacon, Sept. 5, 1880; of which office he is now the only incumbent.

John S. Chandler never held office in this Church, but previously to himself and family uniting with it, on March 6, 1859, he had for several years sustained the office of Ruling Elder in the neighbouring and associated Church of Mt. Zion. He died May 26, 1876, aged 75 years. Mr. Chandler was distrustful and shrinking in discharging his official duties, yet firm and decided in his actions, and clear in his faith. He loved the Church, was liberal in his contributions to its sustentation, and also gave generously to its various objects when properly presented to him. He was fond of preaching, and never absented himself from public worship, when he could avoid it. His wife, Mrs. Adelia G. Chandler, died in the fellowship of this Church, July 30, 1865, preceding him nearly ten years to the home above. Two of their daughters, Mrs. Lerona Ann Foster and Mrs. Eliza Rowena Redditt are still members of this Church. A niece, Miss Ann Eliza Redditt, (afterwards Mrs Price,) professed her faith in Christ while on a visit during the war to her relatives in this vicinity; but shortly thereafter transferred her membership to Teoc Church in Carroll County, in this State, where she resided. At the time when Mr. Chandler and his family transferred their relation from Mt. Zion to this Church, the venerable Mrs. Mary Irby, the mother of Mrs. Chandler, made the same change. During that year, she was summoned away, at the good old age of 87 years; and it became my duty to conduct the funeral services from Mr. Chandler's house, where she resided, in the presence of a large concourse that had assembled to show respect to this mother in Israel, who had long lived in their midst, exhibiting an exemplary Christian life. Her grand-daughter, Mrs. Virginia Irby Bonsall, united with this Church on examination, Dec. 25, 1867, and was removed by death shortly thereafter.

Edwin A. Ervin, another son of Capt. William Ervin, never held office in this Church, though on more than one occasion he was invited by the people to do so. He professed faith in Christ May 25, 1839. He was somewhat fitful in his religious character, occasionally giving way to religious despondency, abstaining from the ordinances, and even holding aloof from the Church, under the temptation that he had no rightful place in it. But yet, at the bottom of his heart, he loved the Church, believed in its saving doctrines, and delighted in its worship. Before sad reverses came upon him, as they did on many others, as the result of the late war, he was liberal and conscientious in contributing to the cause of Christ, and hospitable and generous in his social intercourse. He was disposed to underestimate himself, to undervalue his religious experience, and to depreciate or overlook those

striking excellencies of character which will cause him to be held in long and loving remembrance by many friends. His name will be preserved and perpetuated by his descendents who still remain with you. He died Dec. 9, 1878. His wife Mrs. Virginia Pou Ervin, a daughter of Mr. A. C. Jennings, who united with this Church, Sept. 24, 1842, survived her husband only four months, dying April 7, 1879. Three of their children. Miss Emma E. Ervin, Miss Harriet A. Ervin, and Mrs. Mary Ervin Hairston, were received on examination Sept. 30, 1871.

Mr. Hardin Hairston, one of the early immigrants who came from Virginia, and who lett a large number of descendants, living within the bounds of this congregation, looked to the ministers of this Church for counsel and instruction in divine things; and while I was your Minister, it was my privilege to preach the gospel at his house by his request, when he was disabled by physical infirmity from attending the services at the Church. His mind was, then, turned toward the interests of eternity. It pleased the Lord, of His sovereign grace, to enlighten him in the saving knowledge of the gospel, so that he was privileged to confess Christ before men, ere he should depart. He united with this Church, Oct. 12, 1862, and died on the 23rd of the same month. His son, Dr. P. C. Hairston was received on examination, Dec. 1, 1879, and is now one of your Elders. Mrs. Wortley V. Hairston, the wife of Dr. Hairston, was a member of the Wahalak Church in Kemper County, where her father John T. Moseley resided, but after her marriage, she transferred her membership to this Church, November 27, 1852. Their daughter, Mrs. Sallie S. Ervin, professed her faith in Christ, Sept. 30, 1871, but has transferred her membership elsewhere. In 1859, while I was the Minister, the Lord graciously brought into his kingdom the three daughters of Col. Sam'l Hairston, who had died before I came here, and of his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Hairston, who had then recently deceased, thus leaving them double orphans, viz: Miss Sally Alice Hairston, now the wife of Rev. A. H. Barkley, Miss Sam Henry Elizabeth Hairston, and Miss Mary Theodosia Hairston, who continued their connection until 1873, when they transferred it to Crawford Church. Mrs. K. C. Hairston, wife of N. E. Hairston was admitted on examination, Oct 14, 1864 and was removed by death Oct. 1st, 1875. Her daughter Mrs. Mary Watt Hairston, wife of George W. Hairston, professed her faith in Christ, Oct. 3, 1880, and in the bloom of her married life was cut down by the fell destroyer, Jan 14, 1882, leaving a little daughter who has since received baptism. Mrs. Mary Ervin Hairston, already mentioned as a daughter of E. A. Ervin, the wife of Hardin M. Hairston, was received on examination, Sept. 30, 1871, and is now of your membership along with her four baptized children.

Mrs. Rosamond Odeneal was one of the first seven members. Her husband, Mr. Ebenezer P. Odeneal located in this neighborhood in April, 1834, and when the Church was organized in the June after their arrival, Mrs. Odeneal cordially joined with the other Presbyterians already here, in the movement. She continued a member of this Church, until Mr. Odeneal's removal to Columbus about the year 1851, when her membership was transferred to the Church at that

place, where she died July 14th, 1876. Mr. Odeneal united with the Church, Sept. 7th, 1845, but in January, 1853. was indefinitely suspended. His son, William Odeneal, was received Nov. 24, 1845, on examination, and died not long afterward.

The families of whom I have already spoken were the chief stay and support of the Church during its days of prosperity, and indeed during the whole of the half century now past; and all of these families, with but two exceptions, are still represented in your membership. The children have risen up to take the places of the fathers, and God has shown to you that He remembers his covenant. Besides these families which laid the foundations of this Church, or which have been its earthly support during its past history, there have been many others whose connection with you has been generally for short periods, who are here no more. Even if I had the facts at hand, which I have not, my room is gone, and I would exhaust your patience if I did more than give the briefest mention of each one of them. Miles Love and Dr. James D. Wylie united with you in June, 1838, by letter, but were only birds of passage. as in about three months they obtained letters of dismission. On Sept. 16, 1843, Bushrod W. White was received by letter, and Mrs. Emma T. White on examination, and on May 27, 1849, they were dismissed to the Mt. Zion Church. Mrs. Francis G. Brewer was received on examination, May 25, 1844; Miss Mary Varner by letter, April 19, 1846; and Mrs. Sarah East, on examination, June 5, 1847; and each of them died in your fellowship, but the dates thereof are not recorded. Thomas Matthews was received by letter, Nov. 10, 1839; Mrs. Mary Ann McDonald, by letter, April 27, 1845; Mrs. Mary Norwood, on examination, Sept. 19, 1847; Miss Lizzie Messick, by letter, April 1, 1866; and were all granted letters of dismission, but the dates thereof are not given. F. M. Bloomingburg was received on examination, May 27, 1848, and was dismissed November 5, 1854. Wm. Howe, Mrs. Elizabeth Howe, Harvey Varner, Mrs. Clarinda Varner and Mrs. Elizabeth Varner were received by letter, April 19, 1846, and took certificates of dismission to Mt. Zion Church, Dec. 29, 1850; Miss Louisa White was received by letter May 27, 1877, and died in the following November.

The members of this Church, not previously mentioned, and who still retain their connection with you, are the following, viz: Received by letter, May 27, 1877, A. P. Griffin and Miss Emma Griffin, and Oct. 9, 1881, James N. Bailey. Received on examination, July 4, 1880, Miss Lydia E. Lightfoot, and May 27, 1883, R. B Snell.

It will be remembered that at the organization of this Church nine colored members were received, and that subsequently one hundred and thirty were enrolled. Ambrose Witherspoon, or as he is generally called, "Uncle Ambert," is the only one of the nine who survives, and the only one of the colored race who continues to affiliate with you. From the beginning, the founders and supporters of this Church, with conscientious fidelity, made provision for the religious instruction of their servants, as they did for themselves and families; and always, when employing their ministers, they arranged that there should be preaching for the colored people, on every Sabbath when there was preaching for themselves. Indeed, the servants

had more preaching than their masters. For a gallery was placed in the rear of the Church for their exclusive occupancy; and while I was with you I can testify that, except in inclement weather, it was usually crowded. And, then, as soon as the service for the white congregation was over, the Church was promptly cleared, and was immediately occupied by the colored people, for whom a special service was held. In good weather the house was full above and below. The Elders always remained for this service, when practicable. One summer, I think that of 1858, I held a protracted meeting with them for more than a week, during the very busiest season, with the cordial approval of their masters, without whose co-operation the effort could not have been made. Throughout the neighbourhood, and not alone on the plantations of the members of our Church, the servants who wished to attend were allowed to stop work at four o'clock in the afternoon, so as to have time to attend to their various evening jobs, get their suppers, and prepare for Church. As the result, there were several additions to our Church, but how many I do not remember. The house was crowded during the whole meeting. Moreover, when visiting in the congregation, to stay over night, the custom was to call the servants from "the quarter," together with the family, and worship was held; reading the Scriptures with an explanatory and hortatory talk, singing and prayer. Services of this kind were held by me, not only with the families of the Church, but in nearly all the families of the neighbourhood. My own experience, I had reason to believe, was similar to that of the other ministers who served the Church.

When slavery was abolished, your Pastor, who was my immediate successor, felt a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the freedmen, and established a Sabbath School at the Church for their religious instruction, in which he was cordially aided by the white members. The movement at first looked somewhat promising, but sinister influences were brought to bear, and gradually the freedmen withdrew, and sought connection with Churches of their own race—all, as I have already said, except "Uncle Ambert." Although now more than four score years old, "Uncle Ambert" has remaining strength to attend upon the services of the Lord's house. This venerable brother has always enjoyed the confidence of the Church in a large degree. For many years, during slavery, he acted, by the appointment of the Session, as superintendent of the colored members. This undesirable office he discharged with great fidelity, fulfilling the object of his appointment to the entire satisfaction of the Session, and yet with such a kindly Christian spirit, and with so much firmness and justice that he preserved the good will and regard of his fellow servants. Slavery is gone, and for many reasons I thank God for it; but it is due to the memories of your fathers, and to our much abused South, that such facts as these should have a place in history.

In the records of the half-century, I find no evidence of any special awakening, but constant manifestations of a healthy, progressive advancement, shown in the steady additions to the Church, and in that growing liberality of the people, which is a sure indication of interest and zeal in the cause of Christ. But this is especially made evident in the fact that so large a portion of the increase is from the children

of the Church. God has proved faithful of His covenant. The God of your fathers is still the God of their children and their children's children.

Your fathers placed a high estimate upon their gospel privileges, and felt it to be a duty they owed to God, to their households, and to themselves to maintain the services of religion. The changes of Ministers were very frequent, owing to causes beyond their control; but I am sure no Minister ever left them because his salary was not paid. While I occupied the pulpit, I never had to speak to them on the subject of my salary, for it was always paid promptly, and in advance. Let me commend their example to you as worthy of perpetual imitation. Nothing will weaken the ties which bind Minister and people together more surely than neglect or want of faithfulness in this matter. It is impossible for a Minister to cherish the same ardour of feeling toward those who are unfaithful to him, and who thereby bring himself and family into embarrassment and straits, as he would, if they were thoughtful, considerate and just; and on the other hand, it is not according to human nature for a people to feel that attachment for a Pastor whose very presence, as he enters the pulpit, visits their families, or meets them casually, reminds them of their violation of their covenanted engagements, as they would feel if their consciences were clear. And so, when a Church lacks integrity here, there usually originate from this unfaithfulness, those causes which result sooner or later in a dissolution of the ministerial relation. It is just to add that in a ministry which has not been brief, and which in the Providence of God has been much diversified, my experience in this matter with the Churches which I have served, in every instance except one, has been substantially the same that it was while I was the Minister of this Church. Your fathers held with Paul, that "The labourer is worthy of his hire," "that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel," and in the fear of God acted accordingly.

Such is the record of a half century. Through devious ways, through the sorrows of adversity as well as in the midst of the joys of prosperity, God has been with you and your fathers. He has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. And to-day we raise our Ebenezer in acknowledgement of the goodness and faithfulness of God to Bethel; for assuredly with one heart and one voice we can all unite in testifying that "hitherto the Lord hath helped us." 1st. During all the years, with but brief interruptions, He has given you an evangelical, faithful and able ministry; and the pure gospel of Jesus Christ has been regularly and earnestly preached. 2d. The Eldership which He has raised up from among you, is such as but few Churches similarly situated have ever enjoyed. They were men of decided conviction, earnest piety, and unflinching courage in the discharge of duty, who exercised a diligent watch of the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, and were true examples to the fold. The Church owes much to their wisdom, liberality and faithfulness, especially in their providing for the continuance of the ordinances, under manifold discouragements and interruptions. 3d. God has shown Himself to be faith-

ful to His covenant as I have already said. The children of ~~this~~ Church have from time to time been gathered into this Church and also into other Churches, and even into other denominations; and here to-day, we have the evidences of God's blessing in the fact that we see the children occupying the place of the fathers.

But we stand on the verge of another half-century! Two of those present at the organization are with you now;—only three are on the land of the living. When another half-century shall have sped, who of you will be left to recount the mercies of God as we do to-day! What an exhortation to fidelity is here found, in our mortality! But, oh, what an incentive to duty is offered in the past faithfulness of God! Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Look back over the past fifty years, and see what wonders God has wrought; and then press joyfully forward; for the day of the world's redemption draws nigh. Brethren, Farewell! I had hoped to meet with you again but God has ordered otherwise. We shall I fear see each other, in the flesh no more. I trust by great grace we shall meet in that Presence where there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore.

Your Brother in Christ,
E. T. BAIRD.

NOTE.—Since the preparation of the foregoing Historical Sketch, the following changes have been made in the roll of membership, viz:

Dr. Albert C. Love, died at Darrowville, La., July 29, 1884.

Miss Virginia A. Ervin, now Mrs G. W. Hairston, admitted on examination, August 24, 1884.

Miss Dixie Allison, Mrs. M. S. Hairston, R. P. Hairston, J. A. Salter, S. F. Potts, admitted on examination October 26, 1884.

Miss Mary C. Tapscott, of Staunton, Va., admitted on examination November 22, 1884.

Miss Nannie P. Swoope and Miss Clara A. Swoope, of Buckingham C. H., Va., admitted by letter February 25, 1885.

J. D. Love, dismissed to Center Hill, Florida February 25, 1885.

Dr. John Allison, died March 1st, 1885.

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